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Chapter 7
Motor Vehicle Operations

POLICY AND PROCEDURE
RIDE-ALONG

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to establish a system for “Ride-Alongs” with individuals who have a legitimate interest in gaining first-hand exposure to police work, as well as maintaining procedural control over all “Ride-Alongs”.

II. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Newtown Department of Police Services to provide a “Ride-Along” for the purpose of providing those citizens with a legitimate interest to personally observe police patrol operations and to provide an educational experience. The Ride-Along Policy will establish criteria to determine eligibility and will delineate the duties and responsibilities of officers and citizens involved.

III. PROCEDURES:

A. GENERAL:

1. The Operations Captain will be responsible for overseeing all “Ride-Alongs”. Generally the following will apply
 - a. Unless authorized, no person shall be permitted to ride as a passenger in a departmental vehicle, except when necessary for the performance of a proper police duty.
 - b. From time to time, civilian Town of Newtown employees, or civilians will be authorized to ride in department vehicles during a patrol shift for the purposes of building and maintaining positive relationships and for educating the rider of police duties and responsibilities.
 - c. All riders must complete a waiver of liability form prior to the ride along and all riders must have a background check performed prior to riding.
 - d. When a rider is present, officers will not engage in vehicle pursuits, or subject the rider to unnecessary dangers, which can be reasonably avoided.

Riders will not be permitted into private residences or other locations where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists.

- e. Riders will not be allowed to carry any weapons,
- f. Riders will be identified with an appropriate “observer” outer garment, and must wear department approved body armor.
- g. Riders will have to follow all the officer’s instructions or have the ride-along discontinued immediately.
- h. Riders will not be permitted to ride in excess of 4 hours unless given prior permission by the Chief or Captain.
- i. Under certain extreme circumstances, an Officer may have the rider exit the patrol car to tend to a dangerous call. The rider will be let out in well-lit area or safe area such as an open supermarket.
- j. Supervisors will closely monitor any ride-along for compliance with this policy and to maintain directional control over all situations.

B. QUALIFICATIONS:

- 1. Generally, all riders must be at least eighteen years of age.
- 2. Approved ride-alongs are those authorized under the Citizen’ Police Academy, Student’s Police Academy, and field training for NECC personnel. All other riders must receive the permission of the Chief of Police or Captain. All riders under the age of eighteen must have a parent or legal guardian sign the waiver form.
- 3. Persons with a record of felony or serious misdemeanor convictions will be denied ride-along privileges.
- 4. Spouses, fiancées, boyfriends or girlfriends of officers may be granted permission to ride-along but may not ride with the officer to whom they are married or dating.
- 5. Participants may ride once per year.

C. GUIDELINES:

- 1. Ride-Along shall be a maximum of four hours in duration. The Operations Captain or the shift supervisor may extend this time only.
- 2. The Supervisor or the host officer may terminate the ride-along without notice in response to changing shift strengths, violations of the guidelines by the rider, or other reasonable cause.
- 3. No more than one participant will be assigned to ride per shift. No ride-alongs will occur on the midnight shift (12am-8am).
- 4. Probationary officers will not be assigned a rider.
- 5. The Canine Officer, Detectives, and Supervisors shall not be assigned a ride-along.
- 6. The Coordinators of the Citizen Police Academy and the Student Police Academy are solely responsible for the administering of their student ride-alongs, including background checks, scheduling and notification of the officer

and shift supervisor. The Coordinator shall forward the signed waiver to the Operations Captain for retention.

D. RIDER GUIDELINES:

1. No alcoholic beverages will be consumed immediately prior to or during the ride-along, nor will any person report to the ride-along under the influence of any intoxicating beverages or other drug.
2. Riders shall arrive fifteen minutes early and be dressed neatly and appropriately. Riders shall not wear t-shirts, jeans, dresses, sandals, sleeveless shirts or shorts. Improper attire may be grounds for dismissal from the ride-along.
3. The rider shall bring with them their driver's license as a form of identification.
4. Participants may not carry any weapon upon their person even if they are legally allowed to carry it. Smoking is also not permitted during the ride-along period.
5. Participants shall conduct themselves in a civil and courteous manner and must at all times follow the host officer's instructions.
6. Participants shall not interfere with police officers while in the performance of their duties.
7. Participants shall not perform any police duties nor operate any NDPS equipment. In an emergency, they may take appropriate actions to protect themselves and/or officers. The rider is bound by law to render assistance to the officer if he is commanded to do so. (CGS 53a-167b).
8. Participants shall not converse with any prisoner, witness, or any other person contacted on police business unless the host officer grants permission. The participant will not reveal the identity of any person suspected of or arrested for any offense, nor will the observer reveal the identity of any person detained by police for any reason to any unauthorized person. They shall keep all police matters witnessed, observed or heard confidential
9. Participants shall stay in the patrol vehicle at all times unless told otherwise by the host officer. Participants shall not enter private homes or other areas where a citizen has a reasonable expectation of privacy without the explicit consent of the citizen.
10. Participants shall wear a bulletproof vest supplied by the Department.
11. Participants can cancel the ride-along at any time.
12. Tape recorders, camera, or any other recording devices will not be allowed.

E. HOST OFFICER GUIDELINES:

1. Any officer assigned a ride-along participant for the first time must read the complete "Ride-Along Program" policy and procedure.
2. If an Officer is assigned a ride-along and is unwilling to participate, they shall notify the shift supervisor with the reasonable cause for the objection. At the supervisor's discretion the ride-along will then be placed with another officer.
3. The host Officer may cancel the ride-along at any time for reasonable cause.
4. The host officer will be assigned their regular duties and will respond to all calls for service, which they are dispatched to. At the Supervisor's approval the host officer

may leave their sector to respond to another call, which they feel will be educational for the ride-along participant.

5. The host officer will advise communications when they begin patrol and end patrol with a ride-along.
6. The host officer may decide that the presence of the ride-along participant at a scene is not advisable for safety reasons. In this case the host officer will deposit the rider at a safe location and notify dispatch so a ride back to the Police Department can be secured.
7. The host officer shall not engage in a vehicular pursuit while ride-along participants are in their vehicles.
8. The host officer should explain the cruisers equipment and how it is used, allow time for radar, answer the questions posed by the rider, and share their experiences as a Newtown Police Officer.
9. The host officer shall demonstrate how the radio system in the cruiser operates in the event that the ride-along participant needs to use it in an emergency.
10. The host officer will present himself or herself in a professional manner, keeping in mind that they are representing the Newtown Department of Police Services.

F: MISCELLANEOUS:

1. The Chief of Police only shall have absolute authority to authorize or deny any ride-along, whether falling within or without the boundaries of this policy.
2. Police Commission members and Town of Newtown employees are exempt from the background check and waiver form process.

